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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR WISNER'S MEETINGS IN SOFIA ON KOSOVO

Classified By: Ambassador John Beyrle for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: On December 6 Special Representative to the Kosovo Status Talks Frank Wisner briefed Foreign Minister Kalfin and, in a separate meeting, members of parliament on the outcome of the Troika negotiations and next steps on Kosovo. Wisner told the Bulgarians that although the Troika negotiations did not bring the two sides to agreement on the status of Kosovo, they did result in a commitment by both sides not to resort to violence and a growing consensus among EU members that time had come for a decision on Kosovo's independence. The greatest danger was in inaction, though action would trigger Serb and Russian economic and political retaliation. Wisner underscored that the U.S. will stand by its EU allies and Kosovo in the difficult times ahead and needs Bulgaria to stand with us.

12. (C) Kalfin agreed that the status quo was untenable and time had come for a decision. He said there was "easy consensus" in the EU to deploy a mission to Kosovo after the Kosovar unilateral declaration of independence (UDI), expected to take place in early February after the Serbian elections. The EU would call an emergency meeting immediately after the UDI to formally authorize the mission. The timing of formal recognition of Kosovo's independence will be more difficult and Kalfin said he was still working the issue within the GOB, but he warned that it will be difficult for Bulgaria to be among the early group of countries that would recognize. Bulgaria will work actively with other member states to forge a common recognition policy, also to be announced at the emergency meeting. Wisner warned against separating the decisions on mission deployment and recognition, as that would give the Serbs and Russians room to continue pressing member states to delay recognition. Kalfin expressed concern about Serb economic retaliation, noting "Serbia has the means to hurt Bulgaria." Both Kalfin and the parliamentarians cited the importance of strong U.S. support for Bulgaria and Kosovo in the event of Serb retaliation and of continued engagement with the Serbs to bring them into Europe. Kalfin emphasized that "we don't want a frozen conflict in the region." End Summary.

13. (U) Participating in the meeting with FM Kalfin were Kalfin's chief of staff Gano Gunchev and Political Director for Analysis and Planning Valentin Poriazov. The parliamentarians included, from the Foreign Affairs Committee, Chairman Soloman Passy, Plamen Ranchev, Konstantine Dimitrov, Yumal Lyutvi; from the Defense Committee Asen Agov, Ilko Dimitrov, Yanko Yankov; and from

the Committee for European Issues Maria Angelieva, Hristo Kirchev. The Americans accompanying Ambassador Wisner were Ambassador John Beyrle, Ambassador Wisner's assistant Peter D'Amico, and Sofia Head of the Political Economic Section Jim Bigus.

Meeting with FM Kalfin

14. (C) Foreign Minister Kalfin opened by saying he had recently met with Serbian Foreign Minister Jeremic, who had told him that use of force in reaction to the UDI was a "red line" but that "all else is fair," including electricity and water cuts and blocking international missions. Jeremic had begun submitting to parliament various plans for reaction, "from light to heavy." Once you submit ideas to a parliament, Kalfin noted, "you know what you can expect."

15. (C) Ambassador Wisner said he had come to Sofia to brief the Bulgarian leadership on Kosovo as a member of the U.S. government and as a member of the Troika. The Troika demonstrated to all that no stone had been left unturned in the effort to find a negotiated solution on Kosovo's final status. Though the Troika did not bring the sides to agreement, it helped position the EU to decide on what needs to be done and gained commitments from both sides not to resort to violence, threats or intimidation.

16. (C) Wisner noted that the status quo in Kosovo is not sustainable and that this was also the position of the UN. Further negotiations would only re-plow old ground. The Ahtisaari proposal is still on the table and provides the best way forward. There is danger in taking action but even greater danger in inaction. Serbia and Russia will react strongly and Europe needs to act decisively. There is a consensus forming in the EU in favor of recognition, though there are still some holdouts and it would be good for Bulgaria to join that consensus.

17. (C) Wisner said a declaration of independence would bring a new difficult phase and noted that Belgrade and Moscow could create problems in Kosovo, in the region particularly in Bosnia, in the Caucasus, and at the UN. Wisner noted that it will be a long-term effort getting a new nation on its feet but "I assure you we'll be there. We need you to be there with us."

18. (C) Kalfin agreed that Troika effort was worth it, as it showed the Serbs the international community was ready to listen. It was also important that the sides committed themselves not to use violence and that the EU was involved as an organization. Kalfin noted that were a number of negative scenarios, but the worst for Bulgaria was the creation of a frozen conflict that would be unstable for years. It is better to recognize the realities. For eight years Belgrade had no say in the political institutions in Kosovo except in the north, where its influence is negative. There is the danger of Belgrade using the "migration weapon" with the minority Serb population in Kosovo. Kalfin said Macedonia was also a potential problem area. All Albanian factions, including those in Macedonia and south Serbia, need to agree not to spread violence.

19. (C) Kosovo needs economic development, Kalfin continued, which will be hard without cooperation from Serbia. Kalfin advocated a strong international presence for Kosovo's economy since otherwise, all the Kosovars have to depend on is transfers from abroad. Bulgaria has its own concerns about economic retaliation since there are trade and transit ties and a Bulgarian minority in Serbia, which gave Belgrade the means to hurt Bulgaria. Additionally, Bulgarians remembered costs of the embargo against Yugoslavia in the 1990s and how it fueled the rise of organized crime.

110. (C) Kalfin said the sooner Serbia draws into Europe, the better, and that the GOB is trying to keep a good dialogue with the Serbs. Wisner noted the need to make

clear to Belgrade the need to get to Europe. It will not be easy and they will have to earn it like the others. "The greatest act of friendship to Serbia would be to make it frank and clear - do not prolong the problem."

¶11. (C) On recognition, Kalfin said he was "roaming around the government" still trying to build an official position. Nevertheless, he agreed that additional negotiations were not an option. Kalfin noted that some of the EU countries in the region were reluctant to recognize Kosovo, s independence such as Romania, Slovakia, Greece and Cyprus. Slovenia, however, had fewer concerns. Everyone has to make compromises on this, "the neighbors more." But many countries in the region are hesitating on recognition, and "it is hard for Bulgaria to have a separate view." Kalfin stressed the need for a common EU position. An easy point of agreement would be deploying the ESDP mission to Kosovo, which would be a "sort of de facto recognition." Each nation has its own national process for formal recognition of independence and it "cannot be done in one day." The time before UDI should be used to build a common EU position. Kalfin said that the ESDP mission should be ready to deploy by early February. Wisner noted that if the EU decisions on the support mission and recognition were not simultaneous, there would be trouble. The Russians and Serbs would press for continued delays in recognition and break the European consensus. Kalfin added that if the first and second rounds of the Serbian presidential elections took place on January 20 and February 3 then there should be a delay to let them take place.

¶12. (C) Kalfin described the process leading to the deployment of the EU mission and consensus on recognition. On December 14 the European Council will make a "general political statement" regretting the failure of the Troika effort and saying that in light of the situation "the EU is ready to assume its obligations." There will be "easy consensus" for this statement and it will be "interpreted by EU members as readiness to deploy an EU mission to Kosovo and as a signal to UN SYG Ban Ki Moon." The deployment will have the legal basis of UNSCR 1244, an invitation from the Kosovo authorities, and also possibly an invitation from UN SYG Ban. Following the UDI, an extraordinary EU meeting would take the formal decision to deploy the mission. In the meantime, Bulgaria will be working with the other member states on a common EU position on recognition that will be adopted at the extraordinary meeting.

¶13. (C) Kalfin noted that the partition of Kosovo would create problems for the region. Wisner said the U.S. is determined to resist partition. The Kosovo leaders did not want to cause problems in Macedonia, and they told the ethnic Albanians living in Serbia to stay calm that "they live in Serbia." Wisner warned Kalfin that "you'll have problems - we have to work carefully together." Dialogue with Serbia has to be friendly but clear: "We want you in NATO, EU, etc., but it is not a given, not for free, it has to be earned, and you can't interfere with Kosovo."

¶14. (C) Kalfin raised a recent conversation with Russian FM Lavrov, who argued against recognition and for giving more time for negotiations, pointing out that negotiations on the Middle East peace process were going on for 59 years. Kalfin said he told Lavrov the region does not need that kind of conflict. Kalfin posited that Russia needed these types of frozen conflicts. Recalling a conversation with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Titov where Titov mentioned Kosovo as a frozen conflict, Kalfin repeated that "we don't want a frozen conflict in the region." In closing, Kalfin noted that Russia has a substantial interest in using Serbia as an energy hub. Also, there will be "some period of nationalist disease in Serbia and the Russians will use it. They may go too far." Nevertheless, Kalfin said that Russia did not offer a real political alternative to the EU for Serbia.

Meeting with Members of Parliament

¶15. (C) Ambassador Wisner made a similar presentation earlier in the day to a group of parliamentarians. The parliamentarians agreed that further negotiations would be useless and the time had come for a decision. Former FM and Chairman of the Foreign Affairs committee Passy talked about the need to focus on Serbia "to help it overcome the pain. Europe has to pull Serbia in or it will go to Russia and we don't want another Belarus on our border." Recalling the 1990s embargo of Yugoslavia, several parliamentarians raised the issue of "convincing our constituencies that the EU and U.S. will stand by Bulgaria" in the face of Serb retaliation. Wisner assured the group that the U.S. would not walk away from Kosovo, would stand by its allies, and is committed to helping it develop a stable future for the region.

¶16. (U) Ambassador Wisner cleared this cable.
Beyrle